

Attributes of a Doula-Friendly Hospital

The table below lists attributes of doula-friendly hospitals that were adapted by Doula Coordination Community of Practice participants based on the list of attributes created by the New York Doula Access Project. Next to each attribute are examples of actions hospitals can take to develop and maintain that attribute.

Attribute	Example Actions
Recognizes that the doula has been chosen by the client to be a part of their labor support team and includes the doula as part of the integrated team for the birth.	Develop protocols for including doulas in client interactions prior to delivery, including but not limited to touring birthing facilities, creating and discussing birth plans, and attending birthing and parenting classes. Develop a process for referral of prenatal patients to community doulas. Create regular opportunities for staff and doulas to build collaborative relationships such as co-trainings and meet & greet events. Take action to ensure that all staff are aware of policies related to doulas.
Allows doulas to accompany clients during the entirety of the birthing experience, whether or not the allotted number of support people has been reached.	Enact a policy that specifically exempts doulas from limitations on support people. Enact a policy affirming that doulas may accompany their clients during the entirety of the birthing visit. Take action to ensure that all staff are aware of policies related to doulas.

Ensures that the doula is treated with respect, per the facility's Code of Conduct regarding members of the care team.	Modify current Code of Conduct to explicitly state that doulas should be treated as members of the care team. Modify current Code of Conduct to include standards for respectful interaction with doulas. Develop a Code of Conduct specific to doulas. Train staff (including but not limited to security, housekeeping, nursing, and physicians) on how Code of Conduct applies to interactions with doulas.
Takes action to ensure that staff understand the role and value of doulas to support and advocate for their clients.	Ensure that doulas are included in the development and implementation of staff education related to their services. Offer co-training opportunities for doulas and hospital staff to learn together. Create regular opportunities for staff and doulas to build collaborative relationships such as co-trainings and meet & greet events.
Allows and supports non-medical comfort techniques for labor, not restricting the doula's support to client during specific monitoring.	Develop a policy that affirms doula's role in supporting non-medical comfort techniques for labor, including but not limited to varied labor positions, movement, breathing techniques, aromatherapy, comforting touch, visualization, hydrotherapy, and the use of a birth ball and/or peanut ball. Include policy language affirming support for non-medical comfort techniques during monitoring. Take action to ensure that all staff are aware of policies related to doulas.

Facilitates the provision of continuous, calming support by allowing the doula to be present in triage and, absent a compelling reason to the contrary, for procedures such as epidural insertion and cesarean section.	Enact a policy affirming that doulas may accompany their clients during the entirety of the birthing visit. Create a list of the specific circumstances or activities when a doula would not be able to accompany their client. Take action to ensure that all staff are aware of policies related to doulas.
Ensures that the doula is able to support the client post-partum, while at the hospital, for breastfeeding and additional comfort measures.	Enact a policy affirming that doulas may accompany their clients during the entirety of the birthing visit. Take action to ensure that all staff are aware of policies related to doulas.